

THE TRIBULATION IN REVELATION

**A STUDY OF REVELATION
SIX TO TEN**

Four Expository Sermons

by

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THE TRIBULATION

CHAPTER ONE

"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."
Rev. 7:9, 10, 13, 14.

According to scripture, this present age will end in war and destruction, in religious apostacy, until the Lord Jesus Christ comes back to take out every true believer from both the living and the believing dead of all ages. Then when the testimony of the true church is gone there will follow a period of time, brief but intense, when all the wrath of the devil shall be let loose unrestrained upon the earth. There will be earthquakes, pestilence, disease and wars such as had never before been known. So fierce will be the destruction that it seems all flesh shall perish were it not for the intervention of the Coming of the Lord. This brief period of earth's greatest sorrow is called in scripture by many descriptive names. In the Old Testament the most common name is "the day of the Lord." Wherever the expression DAY OF THE LORD appeared it always refers to this awful period of time between the rapture of the true church and the judgment of the false church. Just remember that phrase; THE DAY OF THE LORD when you are reading the prophecies of the Old Testament. It is also called the DAY OF JACOB'S TROUBLE, because during this time

kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword." Rev. 6:3-4.

THE RED HORSE

The brief false peace of the Anti-Christ is followed by the sudden shattering of this spurious peace and the plunging of the whole world in the greatest war of all time, a war that will culminate in the Battle of Armageddon. The rider upon this red horse is undoubtedly the same as the rider upon the white horse. He now begins to reveal his real identity, and instead of the Prince of peace whom he imitates, he is the old enemy of mankind and God, the devil, incarnated in the man of sin the personal Anti-Christ.

THE BLACK HORSE

When the Lamb opens the third seal we see issuing forth a BLACK HORSE. Here is the description.

"And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.

And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine." Rev. 6:5-6.

From this description, the black horse and its rider are easily identified. It is the scourge that always accompanies and follows war. It is the black horse of FAMINE and inflation. The rider has a balance in his hand. Everything must be weighed. We have seen a little of it right here in our own country during the war when things began to be scarce, the prices soared and everything was sold by weight. After the Church is out, the short false peace, is followed by war, and the greatest famine of all history will grip the world. A measure of wheat will sell for a penny. A measure of wheat is about a quart. A penny was one day's wages for the average laborer of those days. It will therefore take the entire daily wage of the workingman to buy ONE QUART OF WHEAT or about two pounds. Supposing the daily wage to be five dollars, it will buy two pounds of wheat or \$150.00 a bushel. The poor will suffer indescribably; while the rich will be left largely untouched until their money is gone. That is the meaning of the phrase,

"hurt not the oil and the wine."

Oil and wine are symbols of wealth and the wealthy will be the ones who will still have sufficient for a time.

THE PALE HORSE

Following closely behind the black horse of famine comes the pale horse of pestilence and disease, with its resultant death. Here is the way John saw it,

"And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.

And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth." Rev. 6:7-8.

One-fourth of the population dies because of the results of this awful war and famine and pestilence. If the population of the earth is as great as it is now it would mean death, in war, by famine, and by disease, of some FIVE HUNDRED MILLION PERSONS. From these facts you will begin to understand why this period of time is called the TRIBULATION and why we Christians rejoice in the fact that we shall be taken out before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes.

THE FIFTH SEAL

Before going on to describe the rest of the terrible tribulation, the fifth seal gives us a glimpse into heaven. Under the altar in heaven (for there is a temple in heaven), John sees the souls of those who had been martyred during that intense period described under the opening of the first four seals. There will be people saved during this tribulation, notably many of the house of Israel, who will be martyred for their faith. Under seal number five they are assured that their death is not in vain but that they are to be patient and wait until the indignation of the Lord is past.

THE SIXTH SEAL

With the opening of the sixth seal we note an alarming increase in the tempo and intensity of the judgements

his fury upon the earth. God's promise to the church of Philadelphia is,

"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Rev. 3:10.

ARE YOU READY?

The Lord will SOON be here to take away His faithful followers and the wicked shall be left behind to face the wrath of God. Oh flee from the wrath to come NOW and,

"BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND THOU SHALT BE SAVED."

CHAPTER TWO

"And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea.

Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

And I heard the number of them which were sealed and there were sealed a hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.

After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.

And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God.

Saying Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, robes? and whence came they?

And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Rev. 7.

This seventh chapter of Revelation is a continuation of the description of the tribulation period, which follows immediately after the church is raptured in Rev. 4:1-3. We have repeatedly pointed out the simple structure and outline of the book of the Revelation. Instead of being a dark book and one difficult to understand it is instead just what it's name implies—a revelation, one of the easiest to grasp and at the same time one of the clearest statements of the things which lie ahead in God's program. We repeat therefore the simple outline. In chapter one we have a vision of Christ in His second coming glory. He is the center of the book and we must never lose sight of HIM amidst the EVENTS surrounding Him at His second coming. Too many people have been so occupied with His COMING, that they have forgotten HIM. Prophecy deals not so much with future events as with the future of a person, the person of the Lord Jesus. Hence the opening chapter of Revelation is given over to HIM, who must from beginning to end hold the central place in all our studies of this wonderful book of the Revelation of JESUS CHRIST.

Chapters two and three we saw describes the course of the professing church in this dispensation ending with Laodicea. In the midst of this professing christendom is the TRUE CHURCH the body of Christ. At the close of chapter three we see the church lukewarm and indifferent, and so the fourth chapter of Revelation opens with the picture of the rapture, the catching away of the TRUE body of Christ OUT FROM professing religious christendom. The rest of chapters 4 and all of 5 are a description of what John (representing the raptured church) saw in heaven. With the beginning of Rev. 6, the scene returns to earth, and what follows in the rest of the Revelation up to the return of Christ in chapter 19-21, has to do with God's judgments ON THE earth during the tribulation while the true church is with her Lord in heaven. In chapter 19 we have the return of the Lord, followed by the millenium and then the last judgment and the eternal fate. This in brief again is the simple outline of the book, and if you will keep it clearly before you, you will find the study of it in detail not only instructive and interesting but exceedingly easy.

In our past messages we have covered the first 6 chapters of Revelation and today take up the 7th chapter

which we have given at the head of this message. Six seals have been broken by the Lamb and we have seen the results. The Anti-christ is revealed, first as the promiser of a false brief peace under the symbol of the white horse, to be followed by the red horse of war, the black horse of famine, and then the pale death colored horse of pestilence and death. The fifth seal revealed that amidst all this tribulation there were a faithful remnant who had been martyred for their faithfulness, and who will share in the kingdom glory. The sixth seal gave a graphic picture of the awful time of sorrow and death upon the earth when one fourth of the population have perished in war, by hunger and by pestilence.

THE 144,000 ELECT

Chapter 7 of Revelation is a pause, a parenthesis, between the 6th and the 7th seals. When the 7th seal is to be opened it will usher in judgments so terrible; and destruction so complete that except those days were shortened no flesh should be saved. And so we have in this 7th chapter the record of how God is going to keep and protect His people in the midst of this awful tribulation and the approaching day of Jacob's trouble. Judgment is suspended for a little while, and the tribulation held in abeyance until these faithful ones are sealed. That is the meaning of the opening verses of Rev. 7,

"And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree . . . till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads." Rev. 7:1, 3.

Remember the church has been caught away in chapter 4. Satan is loose and the Anti-christ is doing his best to defeat God. In this tribulation period his greatest hatred is against God's ancient people Israel. During the dispensation in which you and I now live, his hatred is directed particularly against the true church, but after she is taken out, he will turn his attention entirely to the children of Israel. Satan knows that Israel is God's covenant nation, and while rejecting His son Jesus now, there is a day coming when Israel shall be converted and all the promises of the kingdom and their re-establishment in the land of Palestine will be

fulfilled. Satan seeks to thwart God's program and so sets out to destroy all Israel, and thus defeat the program of God. He tried it before through Pharoah, then through Nebuchadnezzar, and the Assyrians and the Greeks and the Romans and more recently through Mussolini and Hitler, and a host of other ignorant riot rabblers and inciters of race hatred. But just as Satan has failed to destroy the nation of Israel in the past, because of the intervention of God, so he will fail again. In the past He raised up a Moses and a Nehemiah, and a Mordecai, and so again in the tribulation the Lord will protect His faithful remnant.

THE TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL

How clear is the record in Rev. 7. We are told that there were sealed of the twelve tribes of Israel 144,000, twelve thousand from each tribe, and then John goes into detail and gives each tribe by name, and the number from that tribe, from Judah to Benjamin. Passing strange it is, that there should ever have been any difference of opinion among Bible students as to the identity of the 144,000. Yet strange to say all sorts of foolish interpretations have been made of these 144,000 in Rev. 7, by folks who should know better. It is the old trick of stealing all the promises of the nation of Israel and leaving them with only the curses. It is the dire curse of spiritualizing the scriptures, making the church Israel, and Zion the church, and mixing law and grace, and Israel and the body of Christ, and the church and the kingdom. As a result of this failure to read and believe the Bible literally, and the insistence upon spiritualizing the scriptures, confusion, worse confounded has gripped Christians everywhere. If they would only learn to read the Bible like they read any other book, literally, all this would end.

VARIOUS INTERPRETATIONS

Time would fail us to name all the human interpretations of the 144,000. There are first of all those who make themselves Israel. They say, God is all through with literal Israel; and the church now is Spiritual Israel, and so they claim for themselves the Abrahamic covenant, they say Jerusalem is the church and all the prophecies of the restoration of Israel to the land of Palestine must be spiritually interpreted as applying to the church. This spiritualizing of scripture, I repeat, is

one of the greatest evils which has ever beset the church. If spiritualizing is the work of the Spirit it certainly must be an evil spirit who first instituted it, and made men believe it. Begin with this rule. God means what He says and while we find types and symbols and figures of speech in the Bible just as we do in every other book, it is written that simple folks like you and me may understand it, if we only read and believe it just as it is written, instead of putting something in it or twisting it to fit our personal pre-conceived ideas.

Numerous groups of religious people have in all ages tried to claim they were the 144,000, but none of them have been able to establish their identity with one of the twelve tribes. How much more easy and simple it is when we read it as it is written and then simply believe it. So here is the simple record again.

"And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed a hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand.

Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand." Rev. 7:4-8.

Simple indeed, if we neither add nor take away from that. It simply says, so plainly that any child can understand it, that during the tribulation period God will remember His covenant with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and David and Solomon, and all the promises

of Israel's restoration in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and all the other prophets, and before the Anti-christ can destroy the nation of Israel, God is going to save a remnant of twelve thousand from each of the twelve tribes of the sons of Jacob and seal them for Himself, seal them to escape the destruction of the Anti-christ and seal them to become His witnesses during the tribulation whereby a great multitude of Gentiles will be saved because of the testimony of this redeemed remnant from the twelve tribes of the nation of Israel.

144,000 MISSIONARIES

These 144,000, all Israelites, the physical descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob will become God's missionaries during the tribulation period. As a result of their preaching and testimony, there will be a great number saved from the Gentiles or as the verse in Rev. 7:9 says,

"of all nations, and kindreds and people, and tongues"

These saved ones, from every nation, will be those who had never heard the gospel of God's grace before. When the church is raptured, all those who have heard the Word and been invited to Christ and have rejected Him will be left behind to perish in the tribulation. There will be no second chance for them. But the great masses in the world who have never been presented with the gospel of God's grace will hear the message of grace in the tribulation from the lips of these 144,000 Israelites and as a result a great number will be saved, most of whom will be martyred and will be raised at the close of the tribulation period, as the final gleanings of the first Resurrection. There is no question about who they are, for John is told in very plain language.

"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?"

And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."
Rev. 7:13-14.

In the original as well as in the revised version, you

will find that the expression is, "These are they which are come out of THE GREAT tribulation." Here then is the picture. After the 6th seal, and before the 7th, God, who knows what lies ahead, sealed and saves 144,000 missionaries from Israel who preach the gospel for the rest of the tribulation period. As a result, a great multitude of Gentiles are saved, who are martyred for their faith, and will be added to the glorious company of the church when Jesus returns in Rev. 19:11.

They are to be safe, out of the awful day of the Lord and awaiting the coming of Christ in power. In the meantime they are before the throne of God in perfect bliss, the gleanings of the gospel harvest. How marvelous is the final description of their bliss in the closing verses of the chapter,

"Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor and heat.

For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Rev.7:15-17.

What a picture of peace and joy and quietness. Contrast it with the chapter which follows when the opening of the seals is resumed and we study the judgments of the seven trumpets which proceed when the 7th seal is opened. Here we have a resumption of the awful judgments of the tribulation, but far, far removed from them are His redeemed saints who because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are in the place of eternal bliss and peace.

We believe the fulfillment of those prophecies we are studying to be very near at hand. Very soon the Lord will come to call out His own. And those of you who have heard the message and have been given the invitation and then rejected it will have to face the awful day of God with all of its terrible judgments. But the day of mercy is still here, the door of grace is

still open. The Lord still invites, "Come unto me," and warns you to "flee from the wrath to come."

TRUST HIM NOW

CHAPTER THREE

"And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour." Rev. 8:1.

Silence in heaven for half an hour. That is beyond a shadow of a doubt the longest silence which heaven has ever known, for that place resounds continually with the shouts of praise and adoration of the heavenly hosts as they pay homage and bring glory to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. That is why the silence is mentioned because it is so unusual for heaven to be silent. Yet there it is in the record of John, "There was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour."

The occasion for this silence was the opening of the last of the seven seals which sealed the little book of redemption which we saw was in the hand of the one upon the throne in Rev. 5. That seven-sealed book contained the terms of the redemption of the earth, but it also contained the awful judgments of God upon those who had spurned His redemption. As the seals were opened one by one increasingly terrible judgments fell upon the earth, until six had been opened. War, famine, pestilence, death, earthquakes, hailstones and fire have taken a toll of fatalities that swept one-fourth of the people of the earth into judgment and death. One more seal remains to be opened and the hosts of heaven realizing it is the last and the most terrible one of them all, stands in awe and in expectation at what is coming to pass. They knew something of what lay ahead, though they may not have known all, but this they knew, that they were about to witness the greatest time of sorrow the world had ever seen. And this expectation accounts for the silence in heaven for half an hour.

Many and varied have been the explanations of this

silence but I am sure that you will see what I mean, when I say that this was the silence of awesome expectation. It was as if everything in heaven was holding its breath awaiting the sounding of the first of the seven trumpets which followed the breaking of the seventh and the last seal of the little book. I am sure you know what I mean. Expectation and suspense can be so great that everyone is so intense that one dares not to breathe. You hold your breath and we express it oftentimes by saying, "It was so quiet you could hear a pin drop." It is the silence of suspense at its highest. Suppose I were to tell you a story of a hair-raising experience and related to you how that the victim was being chased by a madman, just escaped from a prison for the criminally insane. With a knife between his teeth and a gun in each hand, sneering and cursing he pursues the innocent victim of his rage. He is gaining on her, inch by inch, now foot by foot. The path leads to the edge of a great precipice with a sheer drop of hundreds of feet to jagged rocks below. Closer and closer presses the slayer upon his victim. His hands reach out to grab her as she reaches the end of the cliff. She hesitates, she wavers for a moment and then! just as the villain lunges at her! just when! . . . That is suspense. If you were listening to a story like that of a real incident and not just a story, you would be holding your breath when the maiden reached the cliff . . . there would be silence; the silence of suspense. Well, that is a faint picture of the silence in heaven. The heavenly hosts have been following the rapid unsealing of the book and have been carried away by the fast moving events of war and famine and pestilence and death, until we saw men hiding in caves and rocks and crying for the mountains to fall upon them. But that was under the first six seals. The seventh is coming and it is the most awesome and terrible of them all. And so, as the Lamb opens this seventh seal and before the first angel trumpeter of judgment sounds his trumpet, all heaven is in suspense at the awful judgments of God. They are breathless . . . silent for about half an hour. And my friend, you too would be silent and breathless if you knew the terribleness of the holiness and judgments of God upon sin. Not a single sinner reading these words or reading the Bible would wait another minute; let alone a half-hour, to cry out to God for mercy and forgiveness if you knew what the

doom of the lost will be as these hosts of heaven must have known as they breathlessly watched the breaking of the last seal in the tribulation period.

THE SEVEN TRUMPETS

The awful suspense was occasioned by the things which were about to take place under the seven trumpets. You will recall that the entire tribulation period is summed up under a trio of sevens. Seven seals, seven trumpets and seven vials of wrath. The seventh seal ends in seven trumpets and the seventh trumpet ends up in the seven vials of final wrath. Generally speaking, the first half of the tribulation falls under the seven seals and the first six trumpets which are a part of the seventh seal. The last half of the tribulation, called the GREAT TRIBULATION, is found in Chapters 15-19 under the seven vials. Between these two, we have four chapters, 11, 12, 13, and 14 which are a preview of the coming great tribulation and introduces us to the chief actors in the last half of the tribulation period. So with the sounding of the first six trumpets we conclude the first half of the Day of the Lord. As the seventh seal is opened, seven angels with trumpets make their appearance.

"And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.

And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand . . . And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound." Rev. 8:2, 3, 4, 6.

Before the first angel blows the trumpet we have the assurance from God that in spite of all the dire judgments which are about to fall that God has not forgotten His people but that their prayers, though long delayed will be answered by Him. For 1900 years the saints have been praying "Thy kingdom come, they will be done," and yet it seems that the Man of Sin, the

Anti-christ will yet prevail. And so, before the terrible time under the trumpets, God gives this vision of Christ adding the efficacy of His own blood as the acceptable incense, together with the prayers of all saints, to assure them, that come what may, their prayers for the return of Christ and the establishment of the kingdom will be answered.

THE FIRST TRUMPET

And so the first angel sounds the trumpet and there falls upon the earth and its wicked inhabitants,

"hail and fire mingled with blood . . . and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up." Rev. 8:7.

This is the judgment upon vegetation and destroys one-third of all growing vegetation on the earth. Then follows the

SECOND TRUMPET

"And as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood." Rev. 8:8.

THIRD TRUMPET

"And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters: And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter." Rev. 8:10, 11.

FOURTH TRUMPET

"And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise." Rev. 8:12.

I have read the record of these first four trumpet judgments without commenting because I believe that they should be read and taken literally. The moment

we begin to spiritualize and make the sun and the stars to mean something else than moon and stars or sun we are in trouble for I have as much right to interpret it one way as you have another. Believe it literally and you have no trouble. When the first angel sounds LITERAL hail and fire fall from heaven. When the second sounds a literal burning mass falls into the sea, and turns to literal blood. If you doubt that, then I ask, do you also doubt that Moses turned literal water into literal blood? You believe that in Exodus but when Revelation says the same thing we must argue it away and say that it must not be taken literally but is highly symbolic and figurative. God who made the sun and moon, the mountains and the stars and the rivers can do with them as He pleases. All these attempts to symbolize these statements are born of a heart of unbelief in the Omnipotence of God.

A SAFE RULE

And right here, let me pass on to you a simple rule, a very simple rule, of interpretation, which applies not only to the Book of the Revelation but to the whole Bible as well. It is this: Always take every statement in the Word of God LITERALLY as meaning just what it says, unless it is definitely stated otherwise or the structure and context is such that you can plainly see that it is a figure and a symbol. This simple rule is the most important rule of Scripture interpretation. For instance. When the Bible plainly states that what follows is a parable then we need not take it literally. Or when the structure of the scriptures indicate that a passage is not a literal fact as when it says "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be LIKENED UNTO a merchant man, etc.", we know it is a parable or a figure. A case in point is right here, in Rev. 8:8 we read,

"And the second angel sounded and AS IT WERE A GREAT MOUNTAIN burning with fire was cast into the sea."

It does not say that it WAS a mountain but AS IT WERE a great mountain, that is, it looked like a mountain. It may have been a meteor or another heavenly body. But if this verse had said that it WAS a great mountain then I should believe this literally. It is therefore not at all difficult to know when we are to

take things literally and when they are figures of speech. Just use the same common sense that we do in ordinary conversation. Our speech in daily life is FILLED with figures and metaphors and symbols but we have no difficulty in knowing what they mean, and when we are to take words literally or as figures. For instance I say, "When he heard the news he went right up in the air." Now anyone knows that I do not mean that he went literally, bodily up in the air and began floating around up there. We know it is a figure. Or I say "Such and such an athlete is a STAR," we know that it is a figure and not to be taken as a literal star. We all know how to distinguish in ordinary conversation between the literal and the figurative but when we come to scripture what confusion exists. Instead of applying the simple rule, "always take it literally unless definitely indicated otherwise," we insist upon making a star mean an emperor or a dignitary or anything else. Or take a case in point in the sounding of the fifth trumpet as found in Rev. 9. Here we are told,

"And the fifth angel sounded and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth."

But the context tells us this is a figure and not a literal star for it says,

"And to HIM was given the key to the bottomless pit."

This star is a being, a person, for personality is ascribed to him. Then it goes on in Rev. 9:2 to say that he opened the bottomless pit and a great swarm of terrible locusts issued forth to torment men upon the earth. But here again the context tells that in this case the locusts were not literal insects but fallen demon beings, for we read concerning them,

"And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon."

When the fifth angel sounds the prison of the bottomless pit is opened and there issue forth supernatural spirit beings to torment men five months. The description of them is terrible with faces like men and hair like women and teeth like lions and tails like scorpions.

Beyond doubt these were a class of especially wicked demon beings who were not permitted to be at large until now, because of their vicious character. There is reason to believe that they were the fallen angels, called the "sons of God" in Gen. 6, who corrupted the human race by an unholy union until God was compelled to destroy the whole race except one family who had escaped this demon corruption. They are the ones Jude refers to when he says of them

"And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the JUDGMENT OF THAT GREAT DAY." Jude 6.

We are discussing in Revelation that same great day of judgment Jude refers to and these wicked demon beings are let loose for a limited time, for five months only to bring judgment upon all the wicked.

What a terrible, terrible time this will be. I am not trying in any way to exaggerate or make it worse, but am only trying to tell you what God's own Word has to say about that awful coming day of wrath. It is not my purpose to alarm you only, but to warn, and if need be, alarm you into seeking shelter underneath the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. In our next message we shall take up the sixth trumpet judgment and then before the seventh and final one is sounded, we shall spend a few messages on the SIX chief actors in the last half of the tribulation period. But now, before the close of this message, let me press upon you once more the need of finding shelter in Christ. The time is near. Everything points to the soon return of the Lord and if you are not ready I plead with you again,

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house."

CHAPTER FOUR

"And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire:

And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth,

And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.

And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.

And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are there, in, that there should be time no longer:

But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.

And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.

And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings." Revelation 10.

In the book of the Revelation we have a chronological account of the course of time from the birth of the Church until the end of time. In the first three chapters of Revelation we have the description of the course of professing Christendom up to the rapture of the true church, as recorded in Revelation 4. From chapters 6 to 19:11 we have a description in great detail of the period of time between the rapture of the church and the second coming of Christ in glory to set up His Kingdom on the earth. This period of time is marked by the judgments of God upon the wicked nations and is described under the figures of seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven vials of the wrath of God. In our studies so far we have covered the seven seals, and the first five trumpet judgments. With the sounding of the sixth trumpet the first half of the tribulation period is over. Two sections comprise the events under the sixth trumpet. In the close of Revelation 9 we have the sixth angel sounding and we see the great army of the end time who will engage in the battle of Armageddon, the last and greatest battle of all history at the close of the tribulation period, and just before the establishment of the Messianic millennial kingdom upon the earth.

AN ARMY OF 200 MILLION

Just before the return of the Lord in glory, there will be the greatest concentration of military power the world has ever seen, under the leadership of two terrible dictators, the political head of the federated nations (the first beast of Revelation 13); and the religious dictator, the Anti-christ, (the second beast of Revelation 13). This army is being prepared in the middle of the tribulation period. In Rev. 9:13-21 we have a description of an army of two hundred million horsemen. Whether this is the same as the army that will gather at Armageddon is not entirely clear as this army in Revelation 9 seems to be a supernatural army, of horrible beings, probably demons who are permitted to plague the unrepentant sinners on the earth for a period of time described as, "an hour and a day and a year." One third of the remaining population of the earth are killed in the space of a

little over a year. That will be the highest casualty report the world has ever known. But in spite of this awful judgment, men do not repent but instead become more bitter and fierce against the very God who was seeking to drive them to repentance by this awful scourge and plague upon the earth. Sad indeed is the record of the close of Rev. 9:

"And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, . . . neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts." Rev. 9:20-21.

THE MIGHTY ANGEL

The next chapter, therefore, is a commentary on the awfulness of the unrepentant, human heart in rebellion against God. In the passage at the beginning of this message we saw a mighty angel, clothed with a cloud, a rainbow on his head, his face like the sun and his feet like pillars of fire, come down from heaven carrying a little book OPEN, and standing with his feet upon the earth and the sea. There is no question as to who this is. It is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Coming King Himself. The description is the same as that given of Him in chapter one. And He still has the little book which we have seen Him take from the hand of the Father on the throne in Revelation 5. For a while we lost sight of that little book, and were so occupied with the opening of the seals that we forgot the little book containing both the terms of the earth's redemption and the judgments which would fall upon the earth in preparing for this redemption. In Revelation 5 the book was sealed with seven seals. It was still closed. Here we are told that now it is OPEN. The seals have been broken and we are being prepared for the final judgements of God in the last half of the tribulation period.

THE END IS NEAR

One more trumpet remains to be sounded and with the sounding of that final trumpet the last three and one-half years of the tribulation will begin. This last three and one-half years covered by the last and seventh trumpet is described for us under the pouring out of the seven

bowls or vials of the wrath of God. When these have been poured out the great tribulation ends with Armageddon, and the glorious, public return of the Lord Jesus Christ in Revelation 19:11. The angel here in Revelation 10, with the book in his hand OPEN with the last seal broken looks to the end of the terrible judgment. And so we see him placing his right foot upon the sea and the left foot upon the land. It is an act of possession. This is Christ finally coming to redeem the earth. In olden times a conqueror would place his foot on the neck of his vanquished enemy and raise his hand in triumph. Well, here is the picture in Revelation 10, looking forward to the end of the tribulation. He roars like a lion indicating his power; and after he had cried and roared like a lion, there is the sudden voice of seven thunders. Thunder speaks of God's judgment and power and here too the seven thunders speak of the judgments which are still to follow under the last trumpet. What the thunders said we do not know for John was expressly told not to write about what he heard, so we shall not speculate, but wait until we meet him.

NO MORE DELAY

As Christ sets his feet on the land and sea, indicating He is about to take possession, and as He raises His hand in victory He speaks in Revelation 10:5-6.

"And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer."
Rev. 10:5-6.

The expression, "time should be no longer" is an inaccurate translation from the original and gives the wrong idea. The literal translation, as you may see by referring to the marginal note in your Bible, or by referring to the revised version is this: "That there should be no more delay." The next verse gives the explanation:

"But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery

of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets." Rev. 10:7.

This, then, is what Christ says in the midst of the tribulation. There is only one more trumpet judgment. It covers the last stage of the tribulation and during those last three and one-half years the whole program of God will be completed and the glorious millennial kingdom set up. Notice it is IN THE DAYS of the seventh angel, when he begins to sound. There will be no more delay but as we shall see the program of God in judgment gains in momentum and intensity without any more pauses through to the end. This last part of the tribulation is described in Chapters 15 to 19. In the intervening chapters we are introduced to the six main actors in the last half of the tribulation, the GREAT tribulation. We take up the study of these actors, the two witnesses of Revelation 11, the woman clothed with the sun and her man-child, the dragon, and the two beasts of Revelation 13, in our next series of messages. It would be well and profitable if you would read thoroughly these chapters in advance, and then when we come to them it will be so much easier to understand, as we can of course only give the highlights and cannot go into great detail.

EATING THE LITTLE BOOK

But now, there remains just one interesting account in Revelation 10, the eating of the little book in the hand of the angel. You recall we first saw the little book in Revelation 5. It was sealed with seven seals; now it is opened and we know what it contained, the good news of the redemption of the creation and the bad news of the judgment of the wicked. The whole book is open now and we know what it tells us. John as he looks is told to do a very strange thing.

"And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.

And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings." Revelation 10:8-11.

Many and varied have been the interpretations of this act. I believe, however that the explanation is simple when we remember what the little book is. It is the book which contains the glad news of creation's coming deliverance but also the doom of the wicked. By turning to Ezekiel 2, I think we will find the proper answer. Ezekiel is commanded to preach to the nation of Israel the WORD of the Lord. This word, as in every other instance, was a TWO EDGED SWORD. It was both a message of SALVATION and a message of DAMNATION. The gospel sword always has these two edges. This is too often forgotten. We are told not to preach judgment and hell brimstone, but the love of God and His mercy and His goodness. The people of Isaiah's day did the same. They said

"Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits. Isaiah 30:10.

Paul emphasizes the two-edged nature of the gospel when he says,

"We are become a saviour of life unto life in them that are saved and a savour of death unto death unto them that are lost."

Jesus said

"He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." John 3:18.

Yes, God is love, but He is also justice. He is mercy, but He is also righteous. He loves the sinner, but He hates sin. The gospel is both pleasant to the saint but a terrible prediction of judgment to the unbeliever. The message is both bitter and sweet. Sweet when we realize that it increases the damnation of the unbeliever who hears the gospel, but deliberately rejects it. The Word

of God not only promises heaven, to the believer, but threatens hell to the unbeliever. It is a two-edged sword. It cuts two ways. It is both sweet and bitter.

SWEET IN THE MOUTH

That is undoubtedly the meaning here when John eats the little book. It is sweet in the mouth and bitter in the belly. Ezekiel in chapter two gives it clearly, referring to the same book.

"But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee. And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and lo, a roll of a book was therein; And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe." Ezekiel 2:8-10.

John's responsibility as well as Ezekiel's was tremendous. And no less so is the responsibility of every preacher whom God calls to preach the gospel. His duty is not to preach what HE LIKES or the PEOPLE like but what God commands him to preach. And that includes the message of salvation to those who believe and judgment to those who reject. The sweet message of hope and the bitter message of condemnation and judgment. Woe to the minister, the servant of the Lord who because of fear of man, cuts the corners, waters down the message, omits part of the message of God. God will hold us to account for God says in Ezekiel 33:7

"So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me.

When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul." Ezekiel 33:7-9.

I promised God when I left the practice of medicine and began preaching the Word that I would preach anything God showed me in His Word, no matter what the cost might be. I did not know the cost then, or I might have wavered, but when I had to pay the price for preaching what I believed, I found God's grace sufficient for me. It cost plenty too. My refusal to compromise to please men, has cost me friends and position and earthly honor and the applause of men, but I thank God I can stand before Him and say, "The best I know how I have preached all I found in the Word, without fear or favor," and His, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," will make up a thousand times over for the bitterness and the privation and heartache and persecution I have experienced from the hands of religious men.

And so I bring again the message, the full message of the gospel. Salvation for you, if you believe. Damnation if you reject. Joy now and peace and heaven bye and bye if you believe. Sorrow now and fear, and hell at the end of the road if you refuse to receive the only One who can save, even the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the book. Sweet in the mouth but bitter as well. To those who believe SWEETNESS! It is honey from the rock. To those of you who reject BITTERNESS and finally perdition. Receive Him today. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.

He that believeth on Him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." John 3:17-19.

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